



AN ENGAGING YEAR
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How sad to look at our year at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin through the rearview mirror, when there is still a short road that lies ahead. But we are all sharply aware of the impending end and it is a nice hit of prospective nostalgia to take stock now.

The project I arrived with was to explore the role of truth in our moral and political lives. Can we make sense of aiming to get things right in difficult moral and political matters?

It seems that we do aim at truth. We make assertions, have strong commitments, act on our beliefs, and change our minds in light of hearing about or having new experiences. All this seems to suggest that we aim at getting things right, despite our beliefs in these domains being heavily dependent on human feelings, context, and history.

The project progressed nicely over the course of the year. I happened to give the first Colloquium at the Wiko and the queries and comments from photographers, painters, novelists, historians, and others not in my field of philosophy were a great start. Right away, the interdisciplinary nature of the Wiko informed my work. In the dead of winter, Robert Talisse at Vanderbilt University came to Berlin and we had an intense week of planning and writing. That resulted in a paper, "Pragmatism, Progress and Politics," which I presented at Stefan Gosepath and Dorothea Gädeke's seminar at the Freie Universität; Rahel Jaeggi's seminar at the Humboldt-Universität and in the Humboldt-Universität Philosophy Department's main colloquium series; and Rainer Forst's seminar at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. This extended conversation with some of Germany's finest political philosophers shaped our paper, albeit mostly by turning it into a polite, but sustained, critique of some of those philosophers. The conversation spilled into public events, such as the reception after Tommie Shelby's first Walter Benjamin Lecture on the terrace of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. It was wonderful to be engaged with Berlin's huge, international, and extraordinarily active world of intellectuals, often at the Wiko during, for instance, Berliner Abend events, often in other parts of the city.

My absorption into the German philosophical world extended beyond the project on truth and politics. I gave two talks in Potsdam, on the analytic philosophers J.L. Austin and Wilfred Sellars, another talk at the Humboldt-Universität titled "The Best of Pragmatism," and three talks in Vienna (not Germany, but close enough) on the topics of truth, philosophical biography, and John Dewey's engagement with the Vienna Circle. Farther afield, I presented a paper in Bologna on perception and gave the Chris Hookway Memorial Lecture in Sheffield. All in all, it was an intense and lovely year of European philosophical discussion.

But the engagement with my Wiko Fellows was even more important to my work than my discussions outside of leafy Grunewald. Not only were there those queries from photographers and historians about my project, but a highlight of my Wiko year was the History and Philosophy of Science working group that convened on Wednesday mornings in the small seminar room. And a highlight of that working group, at least for me, was the project four of us Fellows (a chemist, two philosophers of science, and one

historian of science) started regarding the classification of metabolites. We have almost finished what I think is a very interesting paper, and our next task is finding a journal broadminded enough to see the point of such an interdisciplinary argument.

The small seminar room was also where I delivered my three Dewey Lectures “at” the University of Fudan, and I thank Pit, Gesine, and Frank for helping make that a success. Pit and Gesine arrived early each day to help me set up (I think they would have arrived early even had they not suspected that I was completely useless in these ways), and Frank helped give the slides a professional look.

Lest I neglect the large seminar room, let me say that I loved the weekly Colloquia, the evening events, the important political conversations, and the concerts. David Hughes even provided some country music for this western Canadian.

The library staff was simply stunning. I arrived with two book projects in the final stages of completion. Of course, when the proofs arrived, it turned out that I had neglected to put the page ranges for a large number of bibliographical items. All the librarians did a lot of time-sensitive work to help me get all that in order. When I needed to look at a book of photographs for a cover of one of the books, Denis insisted on driving me to the Kunstbibliothek, as the volume couldn't be taken out of the library. What service! I'll be honored to send those books to be a part of the Wiko library, as soon as they exist in concrete form.

Just as important as the intellectual, political, and cultural benefits of the Wiko were the friendships made or deepened with my fellow Fellows, many of which will definitely continue into the future. There was also the privilege of being a part of the neighborhood. The Floh was our local. The biking and swimming in the woods and lakes was a daily pleasure (and minimized the effects of the brilliant Wiko cooking on one's waistline). We got to know the pleasures of Charlottenburg, and it turned out that most of our old friends in Berlin lived there.

Thank you, Barbara, Daniel, and the rest of the Wiko academic staff, for putting together such a wonderful group of Fellows and partners. Thank you also to the entire staff at the Wiko who work so hard and in such a friendly manner to make everything run beautifully. It was a warm and lovely year, which did not mean that there were no intellectual and political disagreements. But as a true community of inquirers, the disagreements were part of a serious, honest, and respectful engagement with others. I shall miss it.